

October 2016

Issue 13

THE SPECTRUM SHOW

Magazine

STACK LIGHT RIFLE

THE ULTIMATE LIGHTGUN?

MAGAZINE FRENZY

PART TWO OF OUR FEATURE

FLASHBACK 86

GAME REVIEWS

HARDWARE

SPECIAL FEATURES



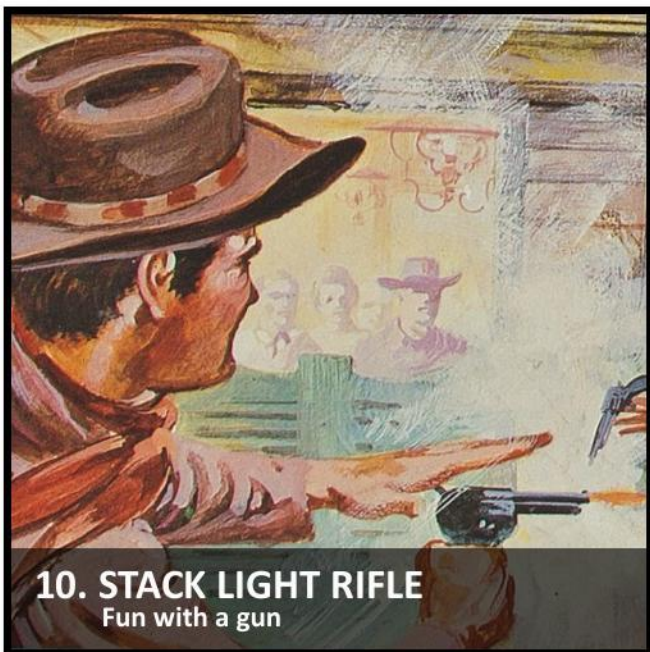
Includes material
not in the video
show!

THE GRUMPY OGRE

More grumpy adventuring
from the ogre himself.



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Welcome to issue 13 and thank you for taking the time to download and read it.

The summer has come back (at least at the time I am writing this) and many of us are off exploring that strange world that people call 'outside'.

This time is ideal to grab some eBay bargains, as many of the buyers are out having barbeques, annoying people with their loud, boisterous behaviour or shackled to the lawnmower by their spouse. (shut up you noisy b*****, it's 9pm and I'm trying to relax and get drunk!).

I recently picked up some rather nice items from the aforementioned site, including some rare hardware, a few nice games and several magazines that caught my eye. One of the magazines I had never heard of before and was not included in my episode 40 magazine special. I also forgot to include another magazine in that feature, which raises the question, should I create updated version?

It was a time consuming process that nearly drove me insane, and you will no doubt have read about that terrible time in previous issues. Doing an update though would be less stressful because there is no time limit and I would have the time to put right a few things right that I was not happy about with the released version.

Whether I do a new version, only time will tell!

On to this issue, and the return of the Vega game section.



It is interesting that the games provided with the Vega do not have any kind of instructions, despite many of the games needing them. I played several games and the majority seemed confusing because I had no idea what I was supposed to do or how I was meant to do it.

The Vega allows you to create your own XML files that dictate how the buttons work, so to build a small addition that would allow you to add instructions seems a blatant oversight.

If the unit was devised to introduce a new generation to the Sinclair machine, then I can see a whole lot of people being utterly confused and frustrated about games that must seem to have no aim!

The new Vega has come under fire yet again from various people, with claims that production is non-existent and backers will lose all their money. It is difficult to pick the elements of truth from the vast amounts of dribble spouted from both sides of the camp, I just hope things work out and the new Vega arrives soon.

Talking of soon, and the Replay Expo is due to come back to Manchester again, and I will be there, camera in hand to report back.

From the future to the past, and as a little experiment I have included a small type-in game to these pages. Back in the day every magazine had type-in listings, so why not this one?

The game was one of the first things I can remember writing by myself, although it does borrow a few things from other listings. I await the reaction to having it here.

I am always open to new ideas for both the magazine and the show, so don't be shy, tell me what you would like to see.

That about wraps up this ramble, and I am going off to read those new magazines I got from eBay.

Thank you for your continued support.

AMSTRAD'S PLUS 2

Amstrad's first Spectrum computer has now started to be built by Timex in Dundee, the same company who previously built other Spectrum models. The micro has now been scheduled for launch in September but the machines specification has now been finalised and production can begin.

The Plus 2 will include a built-in tape deck like Amstrad's other machines, and this should remove issues with loading errors that bugged so many users. However, it but does raise the issue of what happens if it breaks.

The machine will also have 128k of RAM and like the Amstrad CPC range, have a full proper keyboard, joystick ports, RS232 and midi ports. It is expected that the unit will sell for around £140.



QL PLANS BLOCKED

As reported last issue, several companies were looking to take the Sinclair QL and bring it up to date with new designs and upgrades. The main interest being from CST who were looking to produce a machine call Thor.

Amstrad however have now decided that they will not allow QL technology to be used by other companies. Since the Sinclair buy out, Amstrad own the rights to the QL and will block anyone attempting to build machines using hardware based on the design.

Another twist to the story see's Samsung claiming they own the rights to produce the circuit boards, but again Amstrad are disputing this. There is some confusion though as Amstard have the rights to sell anywhere in the world apart from Portugal and Mexico, where Timex have the monopoly. Timex though also have rights to sell to Poland and Eastern block countries, meaning there are alternative routes to obtain QL hardware.

This will keep the lawyers busy for a while.



CART PROBLEMS

Supplies of the Sinclair microdrive cartridges are stable, at least for the moment.



The buyout and Amstrad's export of the older machines had many users worried that supplies would dry up. Several companies though, including the manufactures Ablex, have large quantities still available but the long term future of the storage device is still uncertain.

DOMARK IN TROUBLE

Domark have been politely asked to rename their puzzle game Splitting Images buy the creator of the popular TV series, and similar sounding Spitting Images.

The game does use puppet-like imagery on the cover of the game, and this, along with the name is keeping the lawerys busy.

Domark say they are too small to take on the company, and have laughed off the issue. They are, however, going to re-name the game Split Personalities, just in case.

MICRO SHOOTOUT

Comparing other micro computers of the time, against the Sinclair Spectrum.

Commodore Vic 20

Memory	32kb (with expansion)
Screen Size	22 x 23
Resolution	176 x 184
CPU	6502 @ 1Mhz
Colours	16
Sound	3 voices + white noise.
Joystick	1 port built in.
Connections	Cartridge port. RS232. Monitor. Tape.
Games	Approx. 500
Avg Price	£180.00



ZX Spectrum

Memory	48kb
Screen Size	22 x 32
Resolution	256 x 192
CPU	Z80 @ 3.5 Mhz
Colours	8 + 7 bright
Sound	1 bit beeper
Joystick	Via third party adapter.
Connections	Tape In/Out. Expansion bus.
Games	> 20,000
Avg Price	£175.00



Conclusion

The Vic 20 is a mixture of good and bad, just like every other micro at the time, however it is important that the good parts are what the public want. It had a superior keyboard to the Spectrum, with proper full travel keys along with functions keys and a space bar. The sound was also much better than the Sinclair machine with 3 voices plus a noise generator. This produced identical sounds to the arcade machines and made the Speccy sound ancient.

Graphics is where the problem was, with a lower resolution that gave the games a much chunkier, lo-res look, much like the old TV games that came before it. It was evenly priced and the games were available in good quantities.

The standard model only had 5K of RAM, so you would have to spend more cash to get close to the Spectrum, and this limited sales and games.

GAME REVIEWS

BUCK ROGERS PLANET OF ZOOM

U.S. Gold 1985

Buck Roger Planet of Zoom was released into the arcade by Sega in 1982, but wasn't a massive success. It did feature an early 3D engine that later inspired Space Harrier, and strangely enough had little to do with the Buck Rodgers stories, either the early comic strip, TV series of spin off films. In fact Buck himself never makes an appearance in the game.

The Spectrum version, released by US Gold in conjunction with Sega in 1985, attempted to re-create the arcade machine, but with the obvious hardware limitations of the Sinclair machine, things were never going to be graphically close.

Not having any real 3D hardware or sprite scaling that made the arcade version look quite good, the Spectrum version had instead to revert to solid bands of flashing colour to give the effect of 3D. This affect had been used many time previously, and the PSS game, Blade Alley immediately springs to mind and both games do look very similar. The idea is to survive 5 levels, with each level having four rounds. If you can manage that, you get to battle the mother ship in the game's finale.





Each level is slightly different and is played in a different order from the arcade game, so fans who learnt that will have to re-think their strategy. The first level sees you piloting your ship across the planet's surface, presumably, the Planet of Zoom, and flying through gates. There is no shooting in this level. The landscape moves well and the colour bands give a rough feeling of movement. You have to clear enough gates in the time limit to move on.

Complete this and the next level gives us the same thing but this time you have something to shoot, or avoid. Bouncing aliens appear in the distance and get larger as they approach. There are also saucers, and these for a key element in the game.

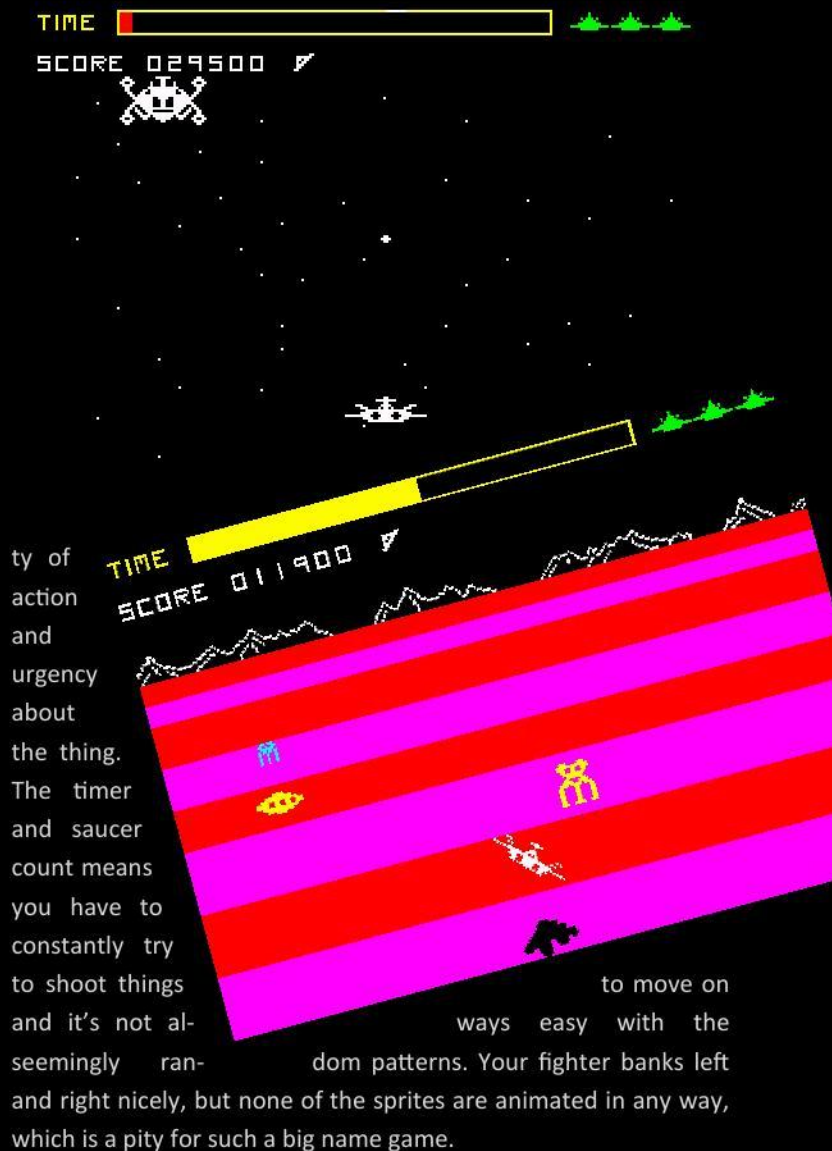
You have to destroy a specific number of these saucers within the time limit, or fly through the gates to be able to move on in the game. The number you need is displayed next to the score.

The next level is pretty much the same but with only saucers. The movement pattern also changes with some of them attacking from the bottom of the screen. Very nasty!

Clear this level and it's off into deep space. The landscape vanishes and again you have to shoot the saucers.

Finally you get the mother ship. This is a hugely un-impressive thing that meanders across the screen just waiting to be destroyed. Complete this and its back to the start again.

Graphics wise the game isn't too bad, the 3D effect is not really smooth but there is plen-



ty of action and urgency about the thing. The timer and saucer count means you have to constantly try to shoot things and it's not al-seemingly ran- to move on ways easy with the dom patterns. Your fighter banks left and right nicely, but none of the sprites are animated in any way, which is a pity for such a big name game.

Sound is used well with effects for firing, passing gates and explosions, the usual stuff.

The whole thing is quite playable but the major flaw is the lack of time replenishment. Usually not long into a new level and your time will run out because it doesn't re-fill when you move levels. You lose a life and carry on, a bit of an oversight I think, that spoils this game.

Overall then, not a bad game. Quite playable but once you have completed the levels, there is not much to return for other than a high score, but event that is tricky due to the timer and previously mention problems.

KICK BOXING

Firebird Software 1987

There is a flimsy story behind Kick Boxing that tells of a challenger failing to turn up for the championship fight, and so members of the audience are asked if they want to have a go. Being the brave sort, you step up and try to defeat Mick the Meat Kicker.

Once you enter your name, which you have to do for every game, you are thrown into the action. Two well drawn fighters are shown in a sort of 3D fashion, with endurance meters at the bottom of the screen. Using the keyboard or joystick, you move around, defend and attack as you see fit.

The combination of directions plus fire allows a variety of moves such as ducking, punching and kicking at different heights and of course backing off like a coward. Because you have to keep track of your health, you'll be running away quite often to stop you being defeated.

The instructions don't really say how to interpret the endurance meters, which is a problem. You are not sure if you should try to deplete your opponent or preserve your own, or both - or in fact which one is yours!

After a few games I think the top one represents yours because when it gets to empty the game ends.

The gameplay is a bit tedious to be honest. You move around and occasionally dive in for a bit of a scuffle, and then back off. You can jump straight in and just try to outfight your opponent, but you have to keep an eye on the meters or you'll end up using all of your energy quickly.

The sound is a bit sparse with just thud noises when you do anything. The graphics are nicely drawn and the backgrounds look really nice.

If you manage to actually beat the opponent three times, you move to the next level that has a different background but no matter what I did I couldn't make it past the first



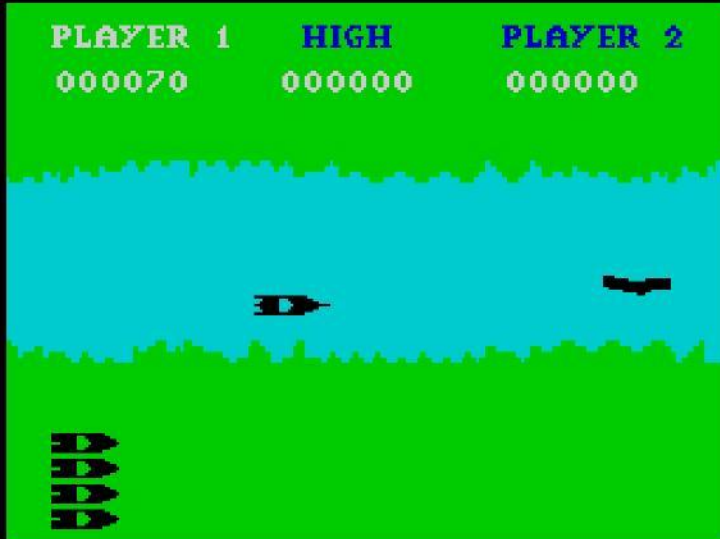
one. Using a poke to stop the opponent's endurance from replenishing finally allowed me to see it.

As for the game then, it's average at best, if you like this style of game, but I think there should be more instructions and a little easier learning curve.

One for fight fans only then..

RIVER RESCUE

Thorn EMI 1984



With so many arcade clones about, companies had to be careful to avoid getting into trouble, and it looks like Thorn EMI's way of doing this was to change the orientation.

This is, in essence, River Raid, spun round so you move horizontally rather than vertically. There are a few subtle differences though. First you are driving a boat rather than plane, and second you have to rescue the scientists lost in the jungle.

Once into the game, the screen scrolls smoothly from right to left, and your boat is positioned in the river already moving at a fair pace. The river is more or less straight, but then obstacles begin to appear. There are logs, small islands and crocodiles. Luckily you have a gun and can shoot the logs or crocodiles.

It's quite tricky to get far without crashing and it is a test of reactions more than anything. If you do manage to get far enough along the river, you can then rescue the scientists for additional points. Here you have to manoeuvre your boat alongside the top pier, still moving at speed, and collect the scientist. You keep doing this until you have a few and then you can drop them off at the next lower jetty.

As the game progresses things get harder with bits of land sticking out and planes that drop mines. If you manage to rescue 6 scientist and let them off in one go, you get the change of a larger bonus by guiding the boat in between two narrow blue rafts... very very tricky...

Then it's back to the river and even more speed.

The game isn't bad, just a bit too difficult and it would have been better to have a slower start and gradually get faster rather than throwing you in at quite a quick pace.

Over all then... not a bad game for a quick pick up and play... why not give it a try.



STACK LIGHT RIFLE

If there was any single advert that caught my eye in the very early days of home computing it was probably the Stack Light Rifle. Not only was it a gun you could use with your computer, but it could transfer into a rifle – just like the ones in all those spy movies you used to watch when they were trendy.

The box is large, and covered with exciting images of cowboys and men shooting ducks, but the real joy is when you open it. The fake wood rifle butt, the detached barrel, scope and pistol jump out at you, and although mainly

made of plastic, they are far better quality than previous lightguns.

The interface is proprietary and does not have a pass through port, so it has to be the last thing attached if you have other adaptors. The cable is very long too, and is permanently fixed to the interface and the pistol.

You can use the pistol on its own with a shorter barrel, or build the whole rifle. This is done by clipping in the butt and tightening the rear screw, loosening the end pistol clip, slotting in the long barrel and tightening again, and finally sliding the scope into place. The end result looks very impressive.

Like other lightguns, the Stack Light Rifle uses the raster of a CRT television to align up the shot position, but unlike other lightguns, it does this differently. There is no screen flash, instead it tries to differentiate colours on screen to detect if the rifle is pointing to them when the trigger is pulled. For example, a dark blue background with a white target.





The first game I tested was Glorious Twelfth. This was a typical, if somewhat very basic duck shoot game. Ducks fly from the bottom of the screen upwards and you have to shoot them. As each duck reaches the top or gets shot, less of the screen becomes available via a lowering skyline, this represents daylight. The sound was good but this hardly made the hardware sing.

It was the same story for the other two bundled games, Gallery (a target shooting game) and High Noon (a cowboy shooting game).

Galley displays a very basic outline using character based UDGs and then a square bounces about. At each side there is an exit, and you have to shoot the square before it reaches the exit.

High Noon follows was much the same style of game play, although here you do get a poorly animated cowboy that climbs the screen and walks across it before turning and shooting you. Again you have to shoot him with limit ammo before he reaches the left hand side of the screen.

Both were dull, lacked decent graphics or gameplay, and did not draw you into the game. They were very much type-in style games in every sense. There were no more games produced for this lightgun either and I think this is a real shame because the Stack Light Rifle is a good piece of hardware.

The thing that is lacking, is some kind of calibration before you begin, then at least you know, based on your height and distance where to aim to get a good shot rather than trying to do it during gameplay.

This was, to be honest, a huge disappointment.

The best thing about it was the lack of screen flash and the fact that it could turn into a rifle. But in use it was close to impossible to hit anything. The lack of games too meant it was set to fail. There were other games announced, but none ever arrived, confining this wonderful looking accessory to the dusty cupboard of failure.





VOLCANIC DUNGEON

afterwards, so for example pressing E will move you East. As you move about various things appear including weapons, monsters and treasure.

Each weapon has a distinct ability and are more effective when used against specific monsters, and this is where the sheet proved a real time saver.

It lists all the weapons and how they can be used against each monster.

When you meet a monster, which you will do very often, you have to choose an item to use to attack it and an item to use to defend yourself. For example you may use a sword to fight and a shield to defend.

Keeping track of all the possibilities of these would be a mammoth task, which is why the sheet is very useful. It doesn't help improve the game though, as there are many things that should not be there in my opinion.

Moving around you find items and bump into monsters.

```
STRENGTH 295      VOLCANIC DUNGEON
WATER 95          ++
RING  --          SZ
```

```
Choose a weapon and attack.
Sword
You have slain
231 Snakes
The others attack.
Choose your defence.
```

You then get a chance to move or fight, keeping in mind the monsters block certain directions. This means you find yourself moving around a lot trying to find useful items before you can even think about fighting.

Moving in the direction the monster is blocking, which is the same direction you just used, results in the end of the game, and back to the game re-initialisation stage.

What makes this difficult is that if you move off the game map, the game ends, so you have to keep track of your position at all times using the map in the booklet.

Volcanic Dungeon was first released by Carnell Software in 1983, and subsequently re-released as an improved version by Mastervision a year later. I will cover the updated version later, but let's start with the original.

When I first got the game from an online store, it had in between the pages of the manual, what I thought was the gamer map, but it turned out to be something much more useful. The game map is actually in the manual anyway, but the hand drawn sheet was in fact a cross reference of weapons and monsters. I'll get onto why that is useful shortly.

Typically with this style of game, there is a quest, and this one sees you heading off to rescue a princess, held prisoner in the Volcanic Dungeon.

When you begin the dungeon is built each time and this takes 30 seconds. Get used to it though, as the game kicks you back here after every little mistake.

Once the game starts, you have an entirely text based view, with very brief location descriptions, strength and water counts plus a inventory consisting of basic UDGs under which is a letter.

Single key commands are used with no need to press enter


```

STRENGTH 293      VOLCANIC DUNGEON
WATER 93          ↑↑↑
RING —●—         SCS

```

```

Choose a weapon and attack.
Sword
Such a weapon is useless against
The Gorgon
Choose your defence.
Club
Gorgon
has killed you.

RUN to start another game.

```

9 STOP statement, 2010:1

Each object is also represented by a single letter, so you have to keep looking up what you have. Some are not always easy, the sword is "S" but the shield is "I" for example.

So to simply things; you move around a fixed game map, collecting items to enable you to survive encounters with various monsters.

If you die you have to re-run the game from the start, so it re-randomises the positions of the items and monsters. This is very annoying and wastes another 30 seconds.

Things get worse though and should you get far enough into the game and make changes that cannot be reversed, you actually have to re-load the whole game, which takes about

```

STRENGTH 279      VOLCANIC DUNGEON
WATER 62          ↑/8↓16±1↓
RING ———        SUJPUJGTP

```

```

Choose a weapon and attack.
Sword
You have wounded the Giant dog
Choose your defence.
Stake
Your armour has protected you
But it has been damaged.
Treasure update: SUJPUJ*TP
You fought off its attack.
Attack again? Y or N?

```

4 minutes. I played this game for ages, using the SMART card to re-load when require, but it was still a real pain to have to do this.

The idea is good, but not at all well executed, which is a shame, because I always wanted to play this game after seeing the adverts. It sounded so cool, but in reality, it proves to be slow and un-interesting, unless you like plotting positions on maps, recording all possessions and testing every item

against every monster for both fight and defence.

Updated Version



```

STR 300
WAT 100
RING —●—
↑
S

```

```

WHICH DIRECTION?
N,S,E, OR W?
YOU TRAVEL TO THE EAST.
YOU ARE IN A TUNNEL.
YOU HAVE FOUND A SCARY STAFF
IT IS GUARDED BY A
ARMY OF MARPIES
DO YOU WISH TO FIGHT? Y OR N?

```

The updated version adds graphics, which does help slightly, but you would still need the map to know if you were about to leave the playing area and subsequently have to re-start again.

The graphics are nice but the font is difficult to read.

The game seems to be identical in play with the same problems and the same sluggish response, although you are told which direction you moved in, which is another little improvement.

Some inputs, particularly picking up items can sometimes just stop working, not sure why, and you just have to keep stabbing away at the key.

The game also seems to move things about during play, so you can move east and then move back west only to discover a magic potion is now in the cave.

This is the better of the two releases though and there does seem to be a lot more monsters around, and almost every room or tunnel will have something nasty to either fight or run away from.

Sadly for me I spent most of my playing time running away... and when I did fight something, my sword and shield both got damaged in the first round.. so I had to run away again..

Oh well... I am certainly glad I didn't buy this when it was released or in fact re-released...

One for the die hard fans I think..

SERIOUS SOFTWARE

BODY WORKS

A DYNAMIC EXPLORATION OF THE HUMAN BODY

We all know Clive Sinclair wanted the Spectrum to be more than a games machine and there is a lot of software out there that covers many other aspects of computing.

Body Works is an educational title but also has several games and interactive elements.

The large box contains two tapes housing sections on Cells, Digestion, Respiration, Circulation, Nerves, Muscles and something called Marathon.

There is a nice booklet that accompanies the software, setting out what it's about and covering each of the sections in detail, with text and images to help things along. This also gives the interactive elements some background so the user understands what they are seeing on screen.

Cells

NERVE CELL
 LOCATION: brain, eye, ear, other sense organs.
 FUNCTION: electrical charge on cell membrane transmits impulses.
 LIFE SPAN: present for life. Only capable of limited repair.

GUT
 NERVE
 MUSCLE
 RED BLOOD



Use cursor keys to move over parts of cell. ENTER confirms. SPACE for cell types.

The first program, cells, explains different cell types and allows you to select different parts of cell for a more detailed description. You can choose to view different areas of a cell and are presented with short descriptions. Some items have numbers which are used to identify specific parts of the diagrams, and to highlight them, you just press that number.



Different amino acids slot into different parts of the RNA chain like jigsaw pieces. Each completed jigsaw is a new protein. SPACE>>>

Cell elements are then explained in simple terms and some have animations to further show how substances can enter and leave the cell.

Digestion

This sections allows us to follow food from being eaten, into the stomach, into the Duodenum and on into the intestine.

LOCATION : STOMACH

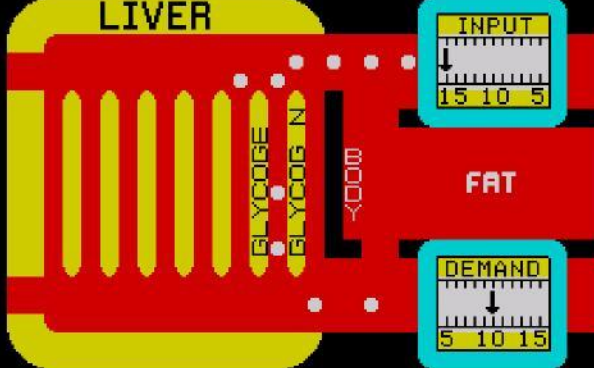


Food is churned up and mixed with acids and enzymes secreted from the stomach wall (1). SPACE>>>

You can follow three food types, but they are all pretty similar using the same character based diagrams and animations.

At the end of this section we are taken to a liver simulation where you can control glucose entering into the blood stream and change the demand from the cells. This little game shows how too much food and little demand shows the body storing excess elements. As a simulation is pretty basic but does demonstrate how digestion works.

LIVER

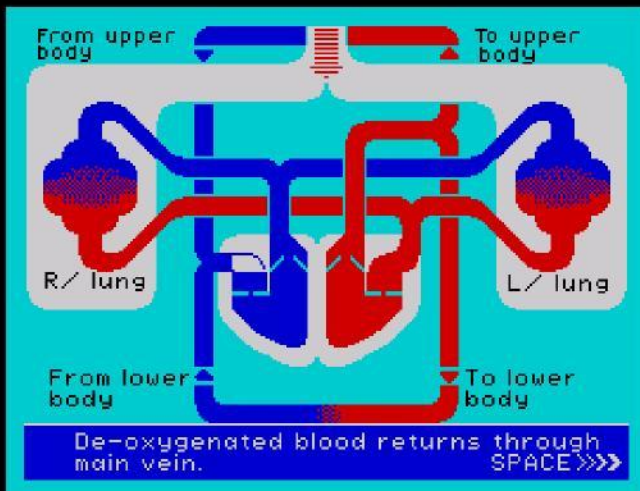


Q/W controls input. O/P controls demand. SPACE for food types. CAPS/A to restart.

BODY WORKS

Respiration

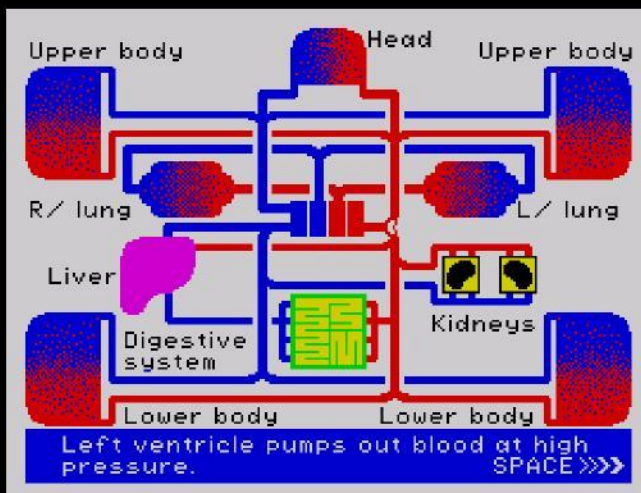
The respiration section attempts to explain how we breath using a nice animated diagram. Breathing, blood flow and heart values are all included and make it quite easy to understand.



We then see how this all operates at different rates, for example resting or running, again all animated using character based diagrams that although are simple, do a good job of demonstrating each section.

Circulation

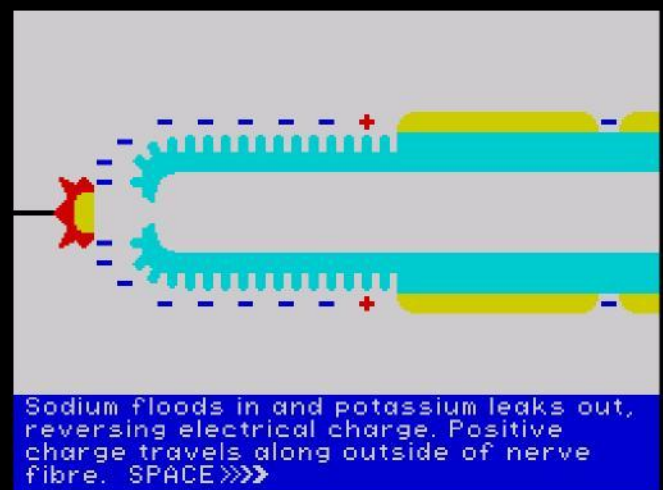
This section covers the blood journey through various parts of the body and using a quite complex diagram.



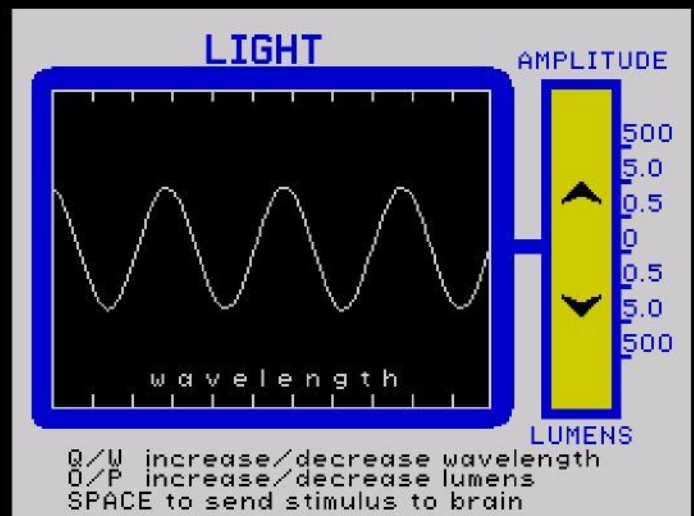
Having to press space for each stage does become a bit dull at times though, but there is an option for a fast replay at the end. It would have been better to offer that at the start I think, but then again this is a learning tool.

Nerves

The nerves section tries to explain how signals are sent from our nerves, via the spinal column into the brain. It all seems very simple, however the accompanying simulator doesn't seem to conclude the journey.



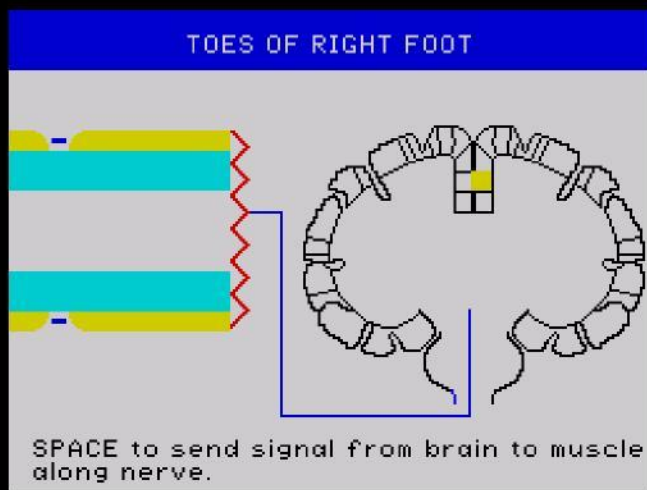
The sight element allows you to adjust wavelength and lumens. The result is then sent on its long journey to the brain and the results are demonstrated on screen . It took me a while to realise that the result was the actual text at the top of the screen that simply said, for example, "Red".



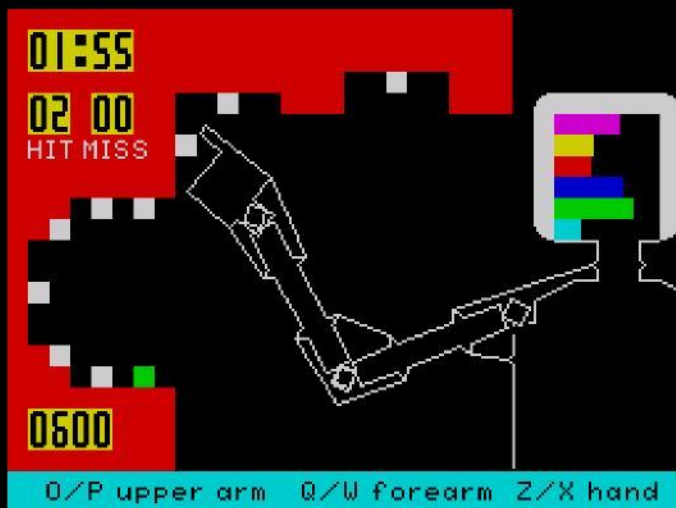
The sound element lets you change wavelength and decibels, and again the journey is displayed and again we get the short text showing the result, for example "High pitch"

I suppose because the Spectrum's sound and colour capabilities it would be difficult to show the colour spectrum or produces the variety of sounds needed for a full simulation, but I think there could have been a better way that a small text message.

Muscles



In the muscle section we are shown how the brain controls the muscles around the body. You can select something like the left leg and see the journey of the signal from the brain to the leg, or whichever body part you chose. You then get to see basic animations of movement.



After this we get the muscle control game, and this is worth the wait.

This is quite good actually and you have to control muscles to point to the designated box, and it does get you thinking.

Marathon



The final program is Marathon. Here using all the knowledge you have acquired by using the rest of the programs, you have to try and guide a runner during a marathon.

You get to control heart rate and output, which in turn causes numerous statistics to be displayed as you push your runner to the limit. The terrain changes and you can adjust your speed based on that and of course your current health status. It's not very exciting and to be honest, and I completed the short run by just setting the man to run at 8 mph.

The package as a whole isn't bad and would be a good teaching aid for children. I think the program would be better if there was someone telling you about each animation rather than using the sparse text or having to trawl through the booklet. It would be ideal for a parent to use though, and I think the child's interest would be kept up if it wasn't for the long loading times.

The best part for me was the muscles game. That was well thought out and tricky to do.

GAME REVIEWS



Gimmie Bright was released in 2011 by Climacus, and is a platform game based on the arcade machine City Connection.

The aim is simple, change the colour of all the platforms on each level and avoid getting killed. Easier said than done!

There are various enemies out to get you, as you would expect, although they are not intelligent and just wander about getting in the way. That doesn't mean the game is easy, far from it, at least for me.

You can also die by falling down the lower sections, although this sometimes didn't happen!

The jump mechanism is a bit odd, but does reflect how the arcade machine worked, and timing your jumps is key to a successful game. You are also constantly moving, so this increases the tension, as there is no rest from the action. The gameplay is frantic, as you desperately try to reach platforms and stay alive.

The graphics are well drawn and animated, and move well. Control is crisp, but it does take time to get used to the jumping.

Sound is used well, with some good tunes on the game menu and nice effects while you play.

I can remember playing a similar game on the Amiga and being addicted, and although the idea is the same, I think the reduced screen size of Spectrum and large sprites limits the freedom of play a bit, especially as you can't jump through platforms.

Overall then, a good, fast platform game that will appeal to players of this type of game.

Once you get the jump sorted out, the game improves quite a bit too, so why not give it a try.



Bug Byte Software 1983

CAVERN FIGHTER

SCORE: 001690 >> FIGHTER << SHIPS
SECTOR: 123456



Cavern Fighter was an early release for the Spectrum, at a time when most companies were focusing on arcade clones, and this is a typical example. The game is a version of the arcade favourite Scramble, and for the time of it's release, is one of the better ones.

The aim is to pilot your ship through various caverns, shooting aliens, blowing up fuel dumps and dodging missiles. The fuel dumps are important as they keep your ship flying, and you have to keep an eye on the magenta strip at the top of the screen that represents your tanks.

At your disposal are lasers and bombs, and these can be used to get rid of any of the aliens or fuel dumps. As you progress, the game speeds up and the

caverns become tighter and tighter.

There are several things missing from this version, notably the open first level and any kind of ending. Instead of blowing up the enemy base as in the arcade version, here you just loop through the final level again.

The city level of the arcade, that introduces vertical shafts, does feature here, although the graphics are strips of brightly coloured blocks that really distracted

from the game. This section also does not have vertical shafts, just a normal cave roof.

The graphics are large and the scrolling is smooth, which is a stark comparison to other versions for the Spectrum. Sound is used well too, making for a great gaming experience.

Control is responsive and difficulty is set just about right, meaning you can get far enough to feel you have done well, but also leaving you wanting to have another go.

A great version that you should try.

SCORE: 006070 >> FIGHTER << SHIPS
SECTOR: 123456



SCORE: 011940 >> FIGHTER << SHIPS
SECTOR: 123456



FEATURE

THE [ALMOST] COMPLETE STORY OF COMPUTER MAGAZINES 1978 TO 2009 Part 3

Still in 1984...

The multi-format approach had been quiet for a while until in April 1984, VNU launched Big K.

Apart from covering multiple formats the inner content was pretty much the same as everything else at the time. There was nothing different, nothing that made it stand out, which is why it probably failed as quickly as it did, lasting only 11 months.

There was the usual news items and industry gossip, type-in games, adventure section and features. Occasionally they had hardware reviews, and randomly thrown in sections about movies or American software.

Like Computer and Video games, it also had an arcade section, as well as covering machines like the commodore, Sinclair, Oric, Intellivision, Dragon, Atari and many others.





The game reviews were short, giving a Big K rating of 1 to 3 depending on how good it was.

The one thing that stands out, at least from a Spectrum perspective, is the coverage of Bandersnatch in Issue 9. Not much was said, but there was a few screenshots of the game.

After this the magazine industry quietened down a bit, with the shelves bulging from excellent content that covered most users requirements. It would be another 12 months before the next one came along.

Lasting a little longer than *Big K* was *Computer Gamer*. Launched in April 1985, it contained the usual mix of news, features and arcade sections, but it was too late to the show. Most of the reviews were short, only having long, in-depth pieces for certain games.

Like many other game focused magazines, it had an arcade section, covering the machines of the day and new games coming soon. It also had a quite large adventure section too.

There were already magazines doing all of this though. I'm not saying it wasn't a good read, because it was, but just not different enough to make a buyer move away from their existing magazine.

The new 16 bit machines were now beginning to filter into the market, and with them new, dedicated magazines. The multi-formats though kept on coming, adding the new machines to their content, but keeping the Spectrum included – at least for now.

ACE and the *Games Machine*, both launched October 1987 and were the big hitters. Glossy covers, great artwork plus the lure of all those new wonderful looking games for the Atari ST, Amiga and Mega Drive.

The end of the 8 bit era was drawing ever closer and the dedicated magazines had their days numbered.

1984 saw *Sinclair Projects* fold.

1985 saw the demise of *Big K*, *Personal Comp Games*, *TV Gamer*, *Home Computing Weekly*, *Personal Computer News* and *Sinclair Programs*.

1987 saw us waving good bye to *ZX Computing* and *Computer Gamer*.

1988 and *Your Computer* and *New Computer Express* printed their final issues.



The History Of Computer Magazines (almost)

The End....

What Micro ended sometime around here – but I couldn't find a definite date.

As for Sinclair dedicated magazines...

Crash lasted until 1992, *Sinclair User* vanished from the shelves a year later in 1993, as did *Your Sinclair*.

Computer and Video Games ended its paper life in 2004.

Lasting all the way to June 2009, the magazine that started it all finally called it a day, and the final issue of *Personal Computer World* left the shelf.

We got a good run for our money, with a lot of great magazines providing a wide range of material spread over ten years. That is a long time in the computer industry, and Sinclair's machine shone bright. A beacon of British brilliance.

It's great to flick through these old magazines, as I do for the news for each show, but it's also nice to just pick one up and read it, to see what was going on.

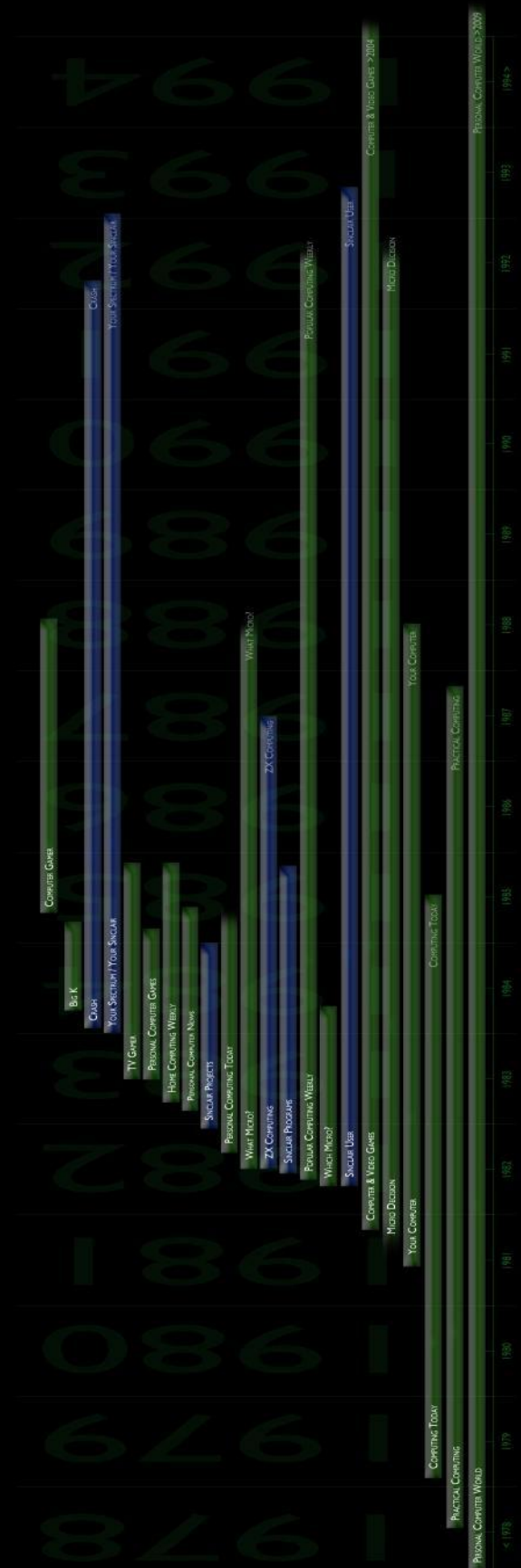
If you haven't got the original paper copies, there are several places on the internet where you can download them onto your computer or tablet. A great way to re-live those dizzy days of home computing.

This may not have been an exhaustive look at every single magazine, but it was exhausting.

Those I Forgot

I know I have missed some out (*Micro Adventurer* and *Games Computing* for example). Not because I wanted to, but because I either missed them during my research or they are very difficult to track down.

Two late editions did feature in the video show, *Micro Decision* and *Personal Computing Today*, and the details of these can be found opposite.



Micro Decision

Micro Decision came along sometime in the early 80's, at least that's my guess, as I struggled to find any information about this magazine. The earliest issue I found was from December 1981. I do have two copies, and rather stern and serious they are too.

Micro Decision seemed to be very much business focussed, containing features on networking, software leasing for businesses, job agencies, and hardly anything at all about the home micros.

There was news of course, and software releases, but these were all financial packages or spreadsheets. No games to be seen here.

This was a business magazine, and the sort of thing you would buy if you were looking to set up or improve your business, and need computer advice.



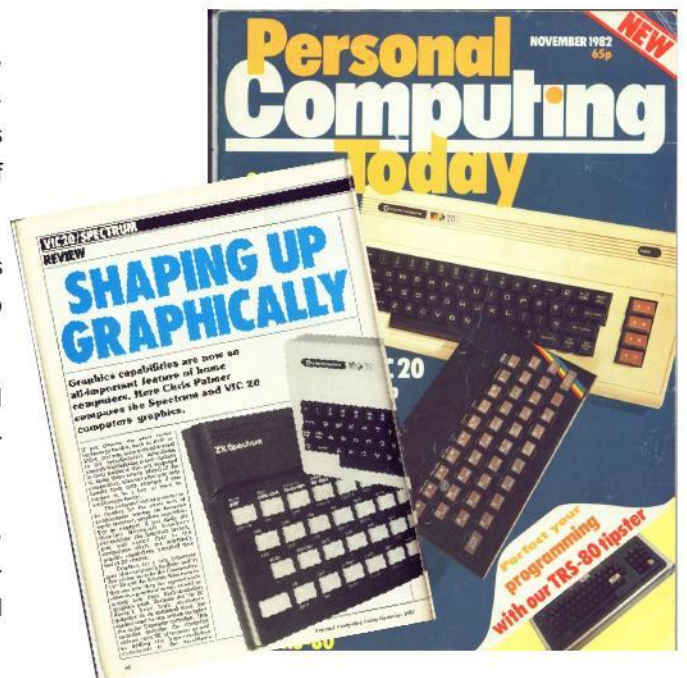
Personal Computing Today

In August 1982, Personal Computing Today arrived on the shelves, and straight away you could tell it was aimed at the home user. Inside, this multi-format magazine covered all the major micros including the Commodore, Oric, Atari, Memotech, Jupiter and of course the ZX81 and Spectrum.

There was the usual news pages, type-in games and letters pages as well as special features looking at different aspects of the micro world, including hardware and computer reviews.

Games were high on the agenda too, with software reviews for all the systems and a handy scoring system. They did show game covers, but hardly any screenshots.

There was a good technical section for readers to ask questions, and a peripheral section too. This magazine seemed to cover everything, there was even a micro comparison section, so you could see how your computer matched up to the competition.



Magazines play an important part in any hobby or even business, and there were some great examples we have just seen.

They help us make purchasing decisions, they help us get further in games, they give us programming advice, they give us free games, they update us on the news and most of all, they entertain us.

It's been great and very exhausting going through my magazines again, there is a wealth of material just waiting to be read..

GAME REVIEWS



MAP :

OBJECT :

UNIT:
COMBAT
DROID

OBJECT
IN USE:
BLAST
TORCH

S=SELECT
0=END
TURN
N=NEXT
UNIT
I=INFO
J=CENTRE

Rebelstar is a turn based strategy game created by Julian Gollop. If you like these kind of games you probably know this man because he is the author of Laser Squad, Lords of Chaos and UFO: Enemy Unknown.

Rebelstar is one of his earlier games, it's also much simpler than the titles mentioned above.

This is a science-fiction game and the action takes place in a moon-base. There is a computer called ISAAC hidden inside and the Raiders want to destroy it. To do this they have to break into the moon-base and eliminate the Operatives defending ISAAC.

There are two separate versions of a game, for one player, and one for two players. In the one player game you control the Raiders and the computer controls the Operatives.

At the beginning you can choose the difficulty level and then the game starts. By pressing certain keys (which are fixed and can't be redefined, so it takes a while to get used to) you give commands to your soldiers. They can move, shoot, reload their weapons, pick up and use objects.

Each soldier has an amount of action points and every action he performs consumes part of it. So it's important to plan your moves carefully. Wasting all action points on shooting isn't a

good idea, it's better to shoot one bullet less and have enough action points to take cover.

After giving commands to all of the Raiders you end your turn and computer starts to move the Operatives. After that it's your turn again.

The moonbase is quite big, but you don't have to discover it room by room because everything, including your opponents, is visible from the beginning. Enemy units also know positions of your soldiers and will try to attack them as soon as possible.

The graphics in Rebelstar are simple but they are clear and look quite good in this kind of game. There are also few interesting sound effects.

The author didn't include a save game option, so playing on real hardware (without interface which can save snapshots) will take you a lot of time.

Rebelstar is a budget title, so you can't expect superb quality, but it's not a bad game. Actually it is quite good and I enjoyed playing it.



MAP :

OBJECT :

UNIT :

OBJECT
IN USE :

S=SELECT
0=END
TURN
N=NEXT
UNIT
I=INFO
J=CENTRE

Rebelstar II

Two years later a sequel called Rebelstar 2: Alien Encounter was released. This time the action takes place on a planet Thray 6 where Raiders fight with Aliens.

The Raiders must collect alien eggs, eliminate as many of the Aliens as possible and escape in a shuttle.

The Aliens defend their base and try to eliminate the Raiders. There are again 2 separate versions of the game and gameplay is based on the same engine (you still have to use keys which cannot be redefined, whole map and all units are visible from the start, there is no save game option) but with 2 tweaks.

First: there is a time limit and you have only 26 turns to complete your mission. Second: the winner of a game is the side with the most victory points. Those points are awarded for eliminating the opponents, taking the eggs aboard the shuttle (Raiders) or preventing the opponents to reach to the shuttle in time (Aliens).

The graphics in Rebelstar 2 are much better, they are more colourful and detailed (black and empty spaces are gone). The game map is varied - there are trees, bushes, grass, creeks, alien base - and this makes Rebelstar 2 more interesting than its predecessor.

The Aliens look like those created by H.R. Giger and known from science-fiction movies. But in Rebelstar 2 they seem to be more advanced because they can use weapons. So, if you want to see the Alien with a gun or a light sabre (or just want to play a good strategy game) load this one.

I recommend Rebelstar games for both novices and experienced players who like strategy games. They can be treated as training before something more advanced, like Laser Squad is played.

Even if you played much more complicated strategy games, Rebelstar and Rebelstar 2 can still be a challenge.

Review by Piotr "PopoCop" Szymanski



PSION'S ARCADE CLASSICS

Psion created several arcade clones for Sinclair in the early days of the Spectrum, and we are going to take a look at two of them, **Space Raiders** and **Planetoids**.

SPACE RAIDERS

Space Invaders was massive in the arcade and every home computer and TV game had a version. It had to or the paying customers would go elsewhere for their alien blasting fix.

The Sinclair machines had many versions, most of which were covered in the very first episode of The Spectrum Show, but few stood out. Artic Computing and Bug Byte produced very good versions, but Psion's release was probably the most well known.

This 16K game gave us large hi-resolution sprites, smooth movement, great control and great sound.

The game itself followed the arcade version very closely, although the invaders in this version were different colours rather than just the fixed colour of the arcade.

The player ship was also different, it now looked like a space ship rather than a laser cannon of the arcade, and unlike the vast majority of the Spectrum clones, the bunkers dissolved in pixels rather than huge chunks or not at all.

The attention to detail was great and the end result is a brilliantly playable game. There were nice little touches like the player lives zooming on screen at the start, and the plodding of the aliens as they marched onwards across the screen.

This was a fine version of the arcade classic and is highly recommended for any Space Invader fan.



Factoids

A machine code game was submitted to Your Computer under the name of Space Evaders. The game turned out to be a hacked version of Space Raiders!

PLANETOIDS

If Space Invaders was the players favourite, Asteroids must come a close second place. The enticing vector graphics, the smooth asteroids that split into smaller chunks when hit, the sounds effects, it all comes together to create a unique gaming experience.

Like Space Invaders, there were many clones on the Spectrum (covered in episode 3) most were character-based jerk fests that only vaguely resembled the arcade version.

Planetoids on the other hand, although slightly different, gave the player that great arcade feeling. The vectors of the arcade were replaced by solids, but the game played just the same.

The player ship had 16 points of rotation, not the smooth motion of the arcade, but twice as good as any version on the Spectrum, all of which gave us just eight.

The movement of the ship was also slightly different and less smooth compared to the arcade counterpart, but at least it didn't send the player hurtling around the screen uncontrollably, like some versions.

Sound was sparse with simple clicks for the firing sound and only a zap affect when you hit one of the saucers. The arcade had some pretty good sounds, but alas, the Speccy had to do with it's little beeper.

When playing this game on it's own you may get the feeling that it's not all that brilliant, but once you have played a few of the other version, you soon discover that in fact, it's a damn fine game in its own right.

It may not arcade perfect, but so far, it's the closest the Speccy has come to the arcade machine.

The bad points are lack of onscreen lives. Without this it's difficult to see how you are doing, and in the heat of battle you soon forget just how close you are to the ominous 'Game Over'.

A good game then, that has that 'one more go' feeling, and so far the best Asteroids game for the Sinclair machine.

0001200



The Forgotten B Side

Planetoids had a bonus game on the B side of the tape called Missile, that many players seem to have missed or ignored.

Sadly it is not a version of Missile Command, instead it's a boring 3D shooting game that is really terrible and not worth the time it takes to load - even on emulators!



VEGA GAME REVIEWS



Reviewing the games
that came with the
Vega console

..but without instructions!

CAVEMAN

This early CRL game is obviously written in BASIC, and this becomes blatantly obvious as soon as the game loads. The BASIC beeper tune and poor UDGs give the game a type-in look.

Without instructions (because I am treating these reviews as though I had just bought the Vega), the game is easy to pickup, and immediately looks like a poor Frogger clone. There are lanes of dinosaurs in the bottom half of the screen and a maze at the top. Above that are, what I think are eggs that our caveman has to get.

You guide our purple hero up the screen, avoiding the various raptors, grab an egg and then have to take it back down to the bottom of the screen.

Although the graphics are poor and unanimated, they do not move in character based jumps as the standard BASIC games do, but in 2 pixel jumps. This still makes the whole thing look blocky and rubbish.

Another problem with BASIC games is the control, and this proves true here. Sometimes the key press is not picked up, sometimes it moves twice, and this just means a lot of frustrating deaths.

The Cavemen moves in 8 pixel jumps, and the whole game is silent apart from when you get an egg or you die. Even then it a few BASIC beeps, sounding a little bit sad at times, with the random beeps often found in magazine type-ins.

The game increases difficulty if you collect all of the eggs by adding more spiders to the road section and the maze section, but I doubt you could stay



Dinosaurs gathering in exactly they way dinosaurs don't!

awake that long anyway.

When the game ends you are asked if you want another try, offering Y or N as options. These have not been mapped to the Vega, so you have to go hunting for the keyboard!

A poor game then, and something that definitely does not show what the Spectrum can do.

DEATH BEFORE DISHONOUR

This 1987 game was originally released by Alternative software, a budget label, so the game adheres to that image you get when anyone mentions budget releases.

Remember I am playing without instructions here, so my thoughts reflect that.

The game is a horizontal shooter and you control a man floating about in space and a collection of junk scrolls smoothly beneath you. The junk doesn't serve any purpose I could find, nor does it change, it just keeps repeating to give a sense of movement I suppose.

Also floating about on screen is a large coin-like object that can't be destroyed. It can be shot and this causes a counter to decrease. If you collide with it, it also decreases the counter. No idea what it's for!

Then come the aliens. These are varying types all with different movement patterns. Some float upward, some zoom diagonally and some bounce around. You can shoot these, and this seems to be the aim!

Shooting all aliens causes another set to arrive, but not all the time, which was confusing. Sometimes a new set would appear even if you left a few of the older batch left!

You man can move all around the screen, and switch direction of fire at the press of a key. This is useful as some movement patterns are best dealt with from a right to left direction, others from the opposite.

All graphics are the same colour, but do move smoothly enough. Your man is a bit under-defined, but reacts well to controls and the other alien types are varied enough to keep things interesting.

Some aliens take more than one shot to destroy, so again we have another mechanic added to keep things going.

Sound is used well apart from the annoying between-game sounds that at first caused me to think the game had crashed!



There are power-ups, but no indication of what they are or how to use them!

To sum up then, not a bad shooter, but players need some guidance as to the aim of the game.

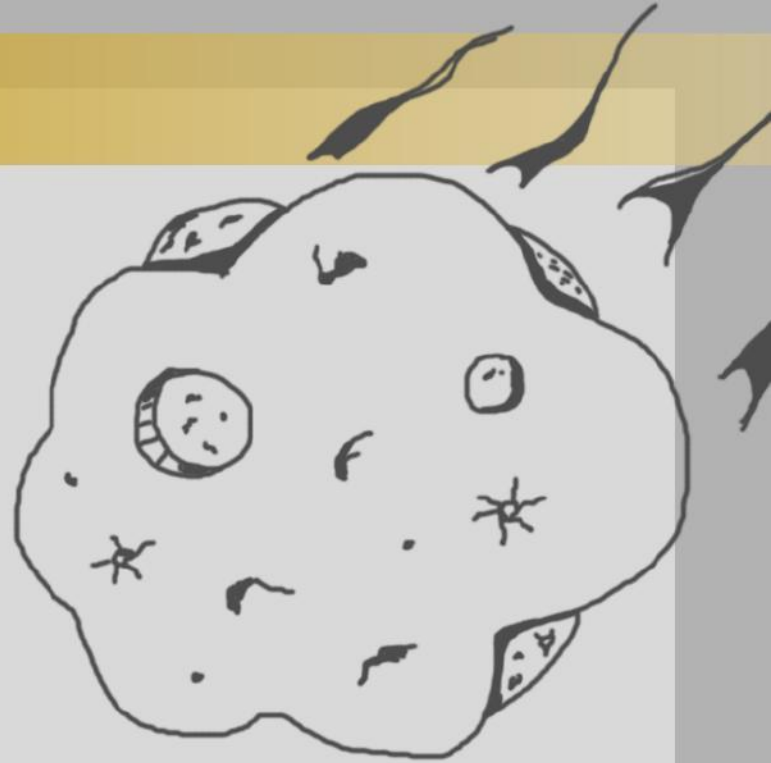
COMETS

An action packed game that demands your full concentration if you are to stop the comets from destroying the planet.

```

1 REM "comet"
2 GO SUB 1000
3 BORDER 0: PAPER 0: CLS
4 INK 5
5 GO SUB 4000
6 LET q=.005
10 LET s=0
20 LET l=11
30 LET x=INT (RND*20)+1
35 CLS
36 PRINT AT 0,0:"SCORE:";s
40 PRINT AT 21,0; INK 4;"
50 FOR h=1 TO 20
60 PRINT AT h,x;"
65 PRINT AT h+1,x;"
66 BEEP q,h-10
67 BEEP .005,h-15
70 IF IN 31=16 THEN GO TO 200
71 IF INKEY$="z" AND l>1 THEN
LET l=l-1
72 IF INKEY$="x" AND l<31 THEN
LET l=l+1
73 IF INKEY$="0" THEN GO TO 20
80 LET l=(IN 31=1)-(IN 31=2)
82 BEEP .004,4
90 PRINT AT 19,l-1; INK 3;"
91 PRINT AT 20,l-1; INK 3;"
100 PRINT AT h,x; BRIGHT 1; INK
2;"
130 NEXT h
150 PAPER 2: BORDER 2: CLS
151 BEEP .6,-30: BEEP .7,-24
152 PAPER 0: BORDER 0: CLS
153 PRINT AT 10,10; INK 5;"YOUR
SCORE=";s
156 PRINT AT 2,10; INK 4;" C
OMET
157 PRINT AT 3,10; INK 4;"
158 PRINT AT 16,10;"Press any k
ey"
160 FOR v=0 TO 3: FOR c=0 TO -2
0 STEP -1: BEEP .006,c: NEXT c:
NEXT v
162 PAUSE 0: RUN
200 FOR n=19 TO h STEP -1
210 PRINT AT n,l+1;"I"
211 BEEP .007,n-21
220 PRINT AT n,l+1;" "
221 REM BEEP .007,n-10
230 NEXT n
240 IF l<>x THEN GO TO 80
250 LET s=s+20: IF s=300 THEN G
O SUB 3200: IF s=1000 THEN GO SU
B 4000: IF s=2000 THEN GO SUB 43
00
251 FOR d=0 TO 6: PRINT AT h,x;
INK (RND*7);" ";AT h+1,x;" "
252 BEEP 0.04,-34
253 PRINT AT h,x; INK (RND*6);"
";AT h+1,x;" "
254 BEEP 0.04,-44
255 BEEP .02,-45
256 NEXT d
300 GO TO 30
1000 POKE USR "a",BIN 00000000
1001 POKE USR "a"+1,BIN 00000000
1002 POKE USR "a"+2,BIN 00000000

```



Graphics Codes:

Line 60: ABC

Line 65: DEF

Line 90: IJH

Line 251: K

Line 253: G

```

1003 POKE USR "a"+3,BIN 00000110
1004 POKE USR "a"+4,BIN 00000011
1005 POKE USR "a"+5,BIN 00000001
1006 POKE USR "a"+6,BIN 00000011
1007 POKE USR "a"+7,BIN 00000001
1010 POKE USR "b",BIN 00010000
1011 POKE USR "b"+1,BIN 00110000
1012 POKE USR "b"+2,BIN 11111010
1013 POKE USR "b"+3,BIN 11111111
1014 POKE USR "b"+4,BIN 11111111
1015 POKE USR "b"+5,BIN 11111111
1016 POKE USR "b"+6,BIN 11111111
1017 POKE USR "b"+7,BIN 11111111
1020 POKE USR "c",BIN 00000000
1021 POKE USR "c"+1,BIN 00100000
1022 POKE USR "c"+2,BIN 01100000
1023 POKE USR "c"+3,BIN 11100000
1024 POKE USR "c"+4,BIN 11110000
1025 POKE USR "c"+5,BIN 11100000
1026 POKE USR "c"+6,BIN 11100000
1027 POKE USR "c"+7,BIN 11110000
1030 POKE USR "d",BIN 00000111
1031 POKE USR "d"+1,BIN 00001111
1032 POKE USR "d"+2,BIN 00000011
1033 POKE USR "d"+3,BIN 00000111
1034 POKE USR "d"+4,BIN 00000100
1035 POKE USR "d"+5,BIN 00000000
1036 POKE USR "d"+6,BIN 00000000
1037 POKE USR "d"+7,BIN 00000000
1040 POKE USR "e",BIN 11111111
1041 POKE USR "e"+1,BIN 11111111
1042 POKE USR "e"+2,BIN 11111111
1043 POKE USR "e"+3,BIN 11111111
1044 POKE USR "e"+4,BIN 11111111
1045 POKE USR "e"+5,BIN 00011000
1046 POKE USR "e"+6,BIN 00010000
1047 POKE USR "e"+6,BIN 00000000
1050 POKE USR "f",BIN 11111100
1051 POKE USR "f"+1,BIN 11110000
1052 POKE USR "f"+2,BIN 11111000
1053 POKE USR "f"+3,BIN 11110000
1054 POKE USR "f"+4,BIN 11100000
1055 POKE USR "f"+5,BIN 11100000
1056 POKE USR "f"+6,BIN 01100000
1057 POKE USR "f"+7,BIN 00000000
1060 POKE USR "g",BIN 00100001

```



```

1061 POKE USR "g"+1,BIN 00001000
1062 POKE USR "g"+2,BIN 10000010
1063 POKE USR "g"+3,BIN 00100000
1064 POKE USR "g"+4,BIN 00000100
1065 POKE USR "g"+5,BIN 10000000
1066 POKE USR "g"+6,BIN 00010010
1067 POKE USR "g"+7,BIN 00100000
1070 POKE USR "h",BIN 10000000
1071 POKE USR "h"+1,BIN 11000000
1072 POKE USR "h"+2,BIN 11100000
1073 POKE USR "h"+3,BIN 11110000
1074 POKE USR "h"+4,BIN 11111000
1075 POKE USR "h"+5,BIN 11111100
1076 POKE USR "h"+6,BIN 11111110
1077 POKE USR "h"+7,BIN 11111111
1080 POKE USR "i",BIN 00000001
1081 POKE USR "i"+1,BIN 00000011
1082 POKE USR "i"+2,BIN 00000111
1083 POKE USR "i"+3,BIN 00001111
1084 POKE USR "i"+4,BIN 00011111
1085 POKE USR "i"+5,BIN 00111111
1086 POKE USR "i"+6,BIN 01111111
1087 POKE USR "i"+7,BIN 11111111
1090 POKE USR "j",BIN 00011000
1091 POKE USR "j"+1,BIN 00011000
1092 POKE USR "j"+2,BIN 00011000
1093 POKE USR "j"+3,BIN 00011000
1094 POKE USR "j"+4,BIN 00011000
1095 POKE USR "j"+5,BIN 00011000
1096 POKE USR "j"+6,BIN 00011000
1097 POKE USR "j"+7,BIN 00100100
1100 POKE USR "k",BIN 0100101
1101 POKE USR "k"+1,BIN 00110100
1102 POKE USR "k"+2,BIN 01101110
1103 POKE USR "k"+3,BIN 10110110
1104 POKE USR "k"+4,BIN 01010100
1105 POKE USR "k"+5,BIN 10110111
1106 POKE USR "k"+6,BIN 00101000
1107 POKE USR "k"+7,BIN 01010100
2000 RETURN
3200 CLS : PRINT AT 8,4; INK 4;
FLASH 1;"+B O N U S*"
3201 FOR v=20 TO 50
3202 BEEP .01,v: NEXT v
3203 FOR v=20 TO 50: BEEP .01,v:
NEXT v
3204 PRINT AT 11,2;"You have rea
ched a score"
3205 PRINT AT 12,2;"of 300,and y
ou may now"
3206 PRINT AT 13,2;"collect a bo
nus of 300"
3207 PRINT AT 14,2;"Points."
3212 PRINT AT 19,2;"GOOD
LUCK"
3213 BEEP .6,4: BEEP .6,2: BEEP
.1,6: BEEP .1,7: BEEP .6,13
3214 BEEP .5,12: PAUSE 10: BEEP
.4,20: BEEP .5,15
3220 PAUSE 700
3230 CLS
3231 LET s=s+300: LET q=.001: GO
TO 20
4001 PRINT AT 1,9; INK 4;"Paul J
enkinson"
4002 PRINT AT 2,12; INK 4;"prese
nts"
4003 PRINT AT 4,8; BRIGHT 1; INK
5;"C O M E T S"
4004 INK 7
4005 PRINT AT 15,1;"Written for
The Spectrum Show"
4010 PRINT AT 7,1;"Destroy the c
ometes before they crash
into Earth"
4011 PRINT AT 12,0;"(Z) - Left (
X) - Right (0) - Fire"
4012 PRINT AT 19,9;"Fire To Star
t"
4519 BEEP .03,10: BEEP .04,8: BE
EP .01,7: BEEP .01,8: BEEP .06,1
1
4520 IF INKEY$="" THEN GO TO 452
0
4521 RETURN
4600 SAVE "█": VERIFY "█"
4601 RUN

```

About Type-In Listings

Type-in games were a staple feature of most of the top magazines in the 80's and 90's. They provided their readers with free games and tools in exchange for a few minutes (or hours) of typing.

It also helped to teach users how to code, and encourage them to experiment with the games. Changing values to see what happened, making improvements and giving them a chance to be creative.

Many of those readers went on to become programmers in later life, and even make a living out of it, myself included. To think it all started with listing like the one here back in the 80's is remarkable.

This game I wrote around 1983, when I was staring to try my own ideas, obviously based on many other games that were similar.

It's very simple, and yet this small listing includes keyboard reading, movement of graphics, sounds, variables and User Defined Graphics.

Your Games Here

I'm sure many of you 'older' readers wrote similar things. If you did, and still have them, why not send them in to be published here!

I am not looking for massive machine code masterpieces, just small, simple games like this.

If you are too embarrassed to be associated with it, I won't even mention your name (just make sure you remove it from the listing!)

ERRORS!

Many type in games had errors, in fact they were famous for it. This listing is a direct print from the working game, dumped using SPIN to a ZXPrinter output, printed to a PDF files and cut & pasted in. It should work fine !!

GRUMPY OGRE'S

Adventure Page

Welcome one and all to Grumpy Ogre's Adventure Page, a place where magic (and plenty of other strange things) happen.

With a glass of grog in my grubby hand, it's time to dive into some adventure games and enjoy or despise them. What will it be?

Oooo! It's an iconic game I hear you scream. The Black Crystal from Carnell is certainly that, with it's mysterious cover and massive 7 part game, but alas I find it utterly frustrating.

Reading the instructions you are flooded with commands to remember; sword up, sword down, shield up.. Blah blah.. And you have to remember all this is real time as the evil creatures swarm around tearing chunks out of you.

You start with an overhead map view of the land where all this takes place, and you move in character based jumps accompanied by BEEPS. Your quest is to locate rings hidden on the map.

After a few moves a creature of some kind will attack and this is where the button mashing takes over. Depending on the creature, you have to attack and defend in a certain way to stay alive.



Playing this section for hours saw me never find a ring or in fact survive longer than ten steps at the most. I once nearly got to the castle, but some dragon turned me into a crispy warrior!

Using the codes found online, I decided to take a look at the other levels, and yes, they are just as bad.

Level 2; The Castle of Shadows sound scary and exciting, but it looks like a type-in game and plays just as bad. The player is represented by an asterisk!! Not even a crap graphic was used!

Gameplay is the same as level 1. Character based movement, sudden attacks by enemies but this one throws in an invisible maze - as if things weren't bad enough already.

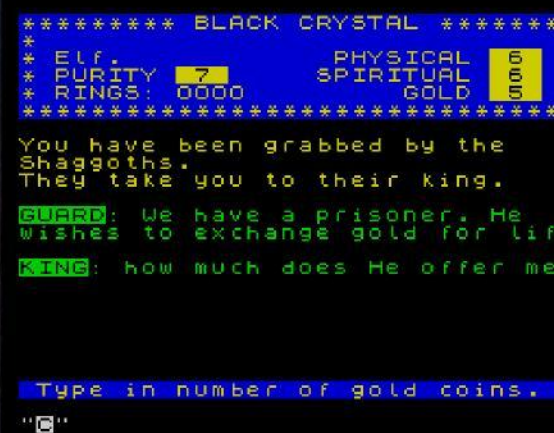


Onwards to level 3 and the famous Shaggoths Lair. This takes the form of the usual text adventure with some of those awful real-time battles thrown in just to annoy you.

The commands are, however, not the usual thing and you have to

type in the command in full, for example you can't just enter "N" to go North, you have to type in "MOVE NORTH".

Each move you are warned if there are any Shaggoths about, and should you run into one, you are captured and taken to their king. Here you can buy your freedom using one or more of the five coins you have at the start.

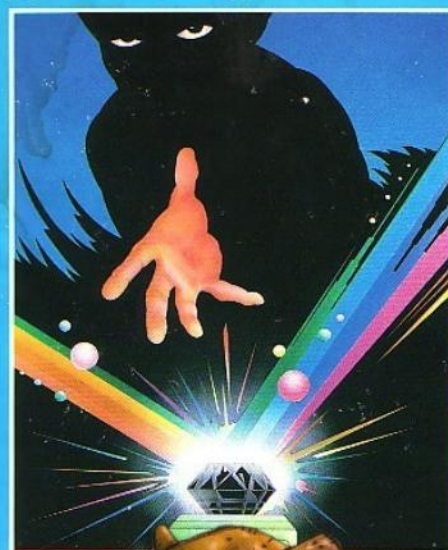


It soon gets tedious, wandering about despite finding the odd coin and treasure chest.

Level 4 presents you with another real-time experience. To pay a dwarf to show the path through the swamp, you have to find diamonds in the Sea of Sand.



BLACK CRYSTAL



An epic role-
adventure of
in six parts



Such a shame, as this was an iconic title, heavily advertised and with great packaging. We must remember that it was released in 1982 though, but to not have UDGs was a big mistake.

Another childhood memory shattered!

See you next time.

Here you move about blindly being chased by sands sharks, or as they appear on screen, checked blocks.

The sand sharks move faster than you do, so again this section soon becomes frustrating. Because the game is in BASIC, you can break into it, and looking at line 6 you can see where the number of diamonds are stored. Changing this will let you bypass the Sea of Sand, pay the dwarf and navigate through the swamp.

You are then back into the text adventure and get killed by a mummy!

The next level is the Temple of the Fire Demon. Oooooo scary...

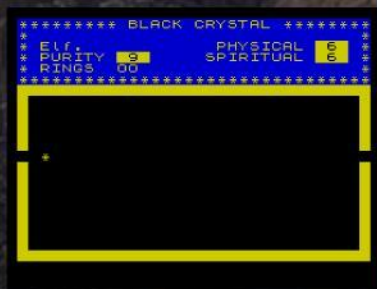
Back to real-time shenanigans again. Stabbing randomly at keys in the hope of surviving.



I soon got bored, broke into the code and found the lines that moved the bloody dragons. (2390,2395,2400 and 2405), added a REM at the start and put a stop the chasing beasts.

This allows you to get to the invis-

ible maze!! Argh!! More of the same but this time you can't see the path. Bored...



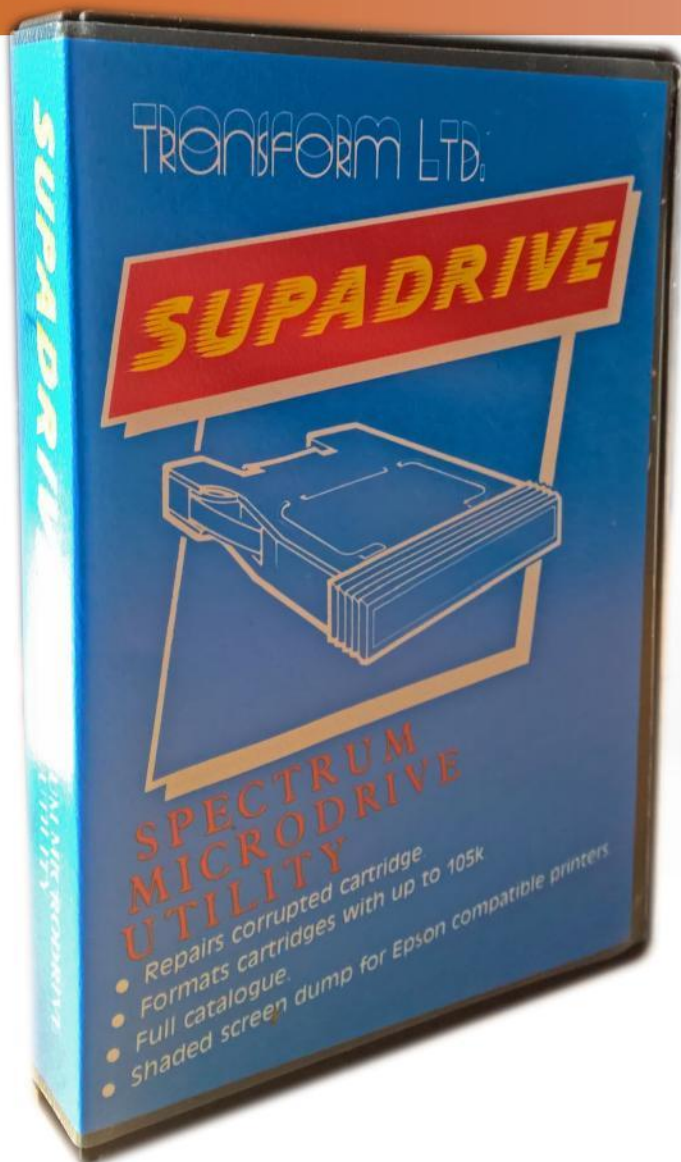
Next level...

Mmmm a room full of opening and closing pits you have to avoid. This is so reminiscent of a type-in game, and is really down to luck rather than skill.

You, or should I say the asterisk, just has to reach the top of the screen... that's all, but it is hard due to the random nature of the pits and the sirens that draw you towards them!



To be honest, by this point I was bordering on a nervous break down. It was more interesting to break into the code and see what was going on rather than playing the actual game.



SUPADrive

Microdrive Utility Software

For Microdrive users, Interface 1 gave us quite a few commands to use, patched into Sinclair BASIC. You could format, copy, load, merge, save, erase, use data channels and get a listing of contents. They were pretty basic, but covered most uses and despite the strange syntax, were easy to use.

If you wanted extra functions you had to buy something extra, something like Supadrive from Transform Ltd.

Inside the box is an instruction sheet and the Microdrive cartridge. Loading the basic menu gives your three options;

A4 Shade copy

Supadrive

And CAT

The shaded print gives you a fully shaded printout, but seeing as my printer is not compatible, lets move on.

Supadrive

Supadrive provides a set of useful tools to help you maintain and use your Sinclair Microdrive.

If you want more space on your cartridge, you can use the FORMAT tool. Normally using the Sinclair version you will get about 85K per cartridge, but the Supadrive version will get you around 105K. It does this by formatting to a higher density, which is selectable, but the instructions do warn you that higher densities may not



always work properly, so you will have to experiment.

Next is the CAT tool.

The Sinclair version just displays the name of the cartridge, the files on it and how much space is left.

This expands on that with more details including the size and start address of any machine code files.

Lastly we have the repair tool.

This will go through the sectors of BASIC programs, attempting to repair the checksums and this will hopefully allow them to be loaded. If you have programs that report file not found, then this should be able to at least recover some of the broken code.

Back to the main menu and the final tool, which is CAT. This is different from the one found in the main Supadrive application, and allows you to build small menus for your programs.

The main problem is that your programs all have to start with a full stop for the program to see them. This can be changed by hacking into the code though.

Once you have a cart full of your programs, running this will give you a very basic menu that will allow you to run the program using a single key press.

Not very exciting, and something you could make yourself in a few minutes.

Supadrive then is a collection of useful tools, but I am not sure if they are useful enough to charge nearly ten pounds for.

There were similar tools free on several tape magazines and as type-ins...

Useful then, but not at the price asked.

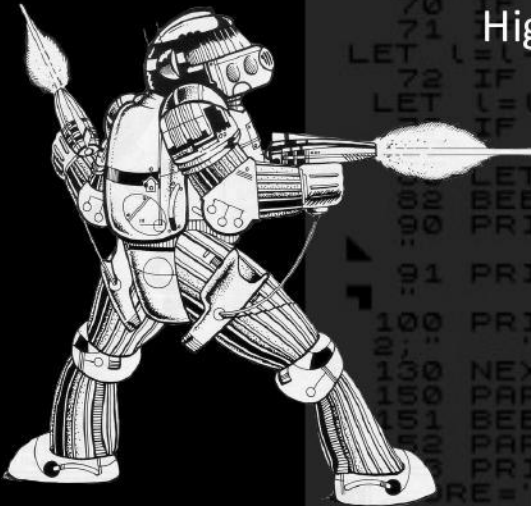
The Silly Bit

If you want to pretend to use a computer, at least plug it in first!



TYPE-IN CORNER

Highlighting Games You May Have Missed



Game: UFO Attack
Magazine: Sinclair Programs Feb 85
Type: Arcade
Author: Anthony Sherwood

This game appeared in Sinclair Programs in February 1985, and unlike the majority of games in that publication, it included machine code to spice things up a little.

Like many other games at the time, you are called upon to defend the city from attacking UFOs.

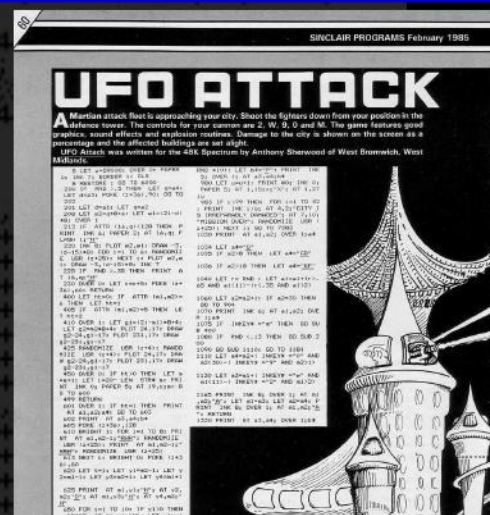
The city is drawn out really nicely with office blocks, roads and trees.

The action takes place in the top half of the screen, and here the starry night sky is soon invaded by various UFOs.

These move around zapping the city causing damage which can be seen in the control panel at the bottom of the screen.

You control a gun sight that you move around, and if you can line up one of the UFOs, you can let rip with your guns. Hit one and it blows up with a satisfying sound effect.

A nice little game worth trying out.



JOIN

Retro Souls 2011

Denis Grachev is known for producing excellent games on the Spectrum, and this lesser recognised gem is a great example.

Like all good games, the idea is simple. Bounce around the various screens collecting hearts. Sounds easy, but once you start playing, the game pulls you in.

The main character, a smiley face, constantly bounces up and down, and your only control is left or right. Using this simple method you have to bounce our little hero around, navigating the platforms.

There are also dangerous red spikes all around, so precise manoeuvring is essential.

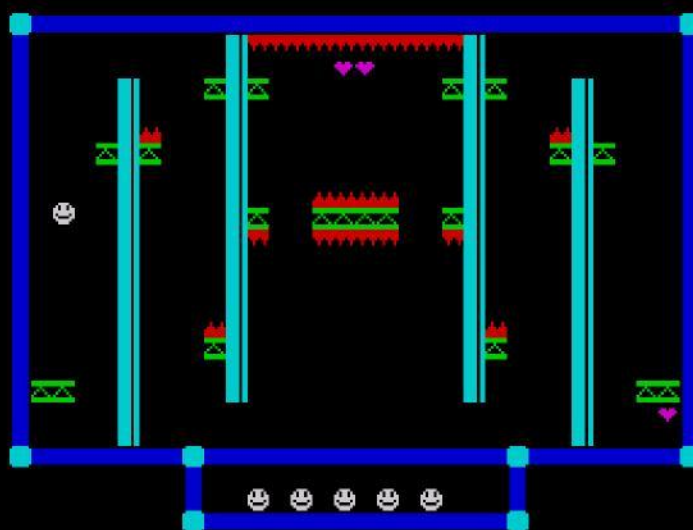
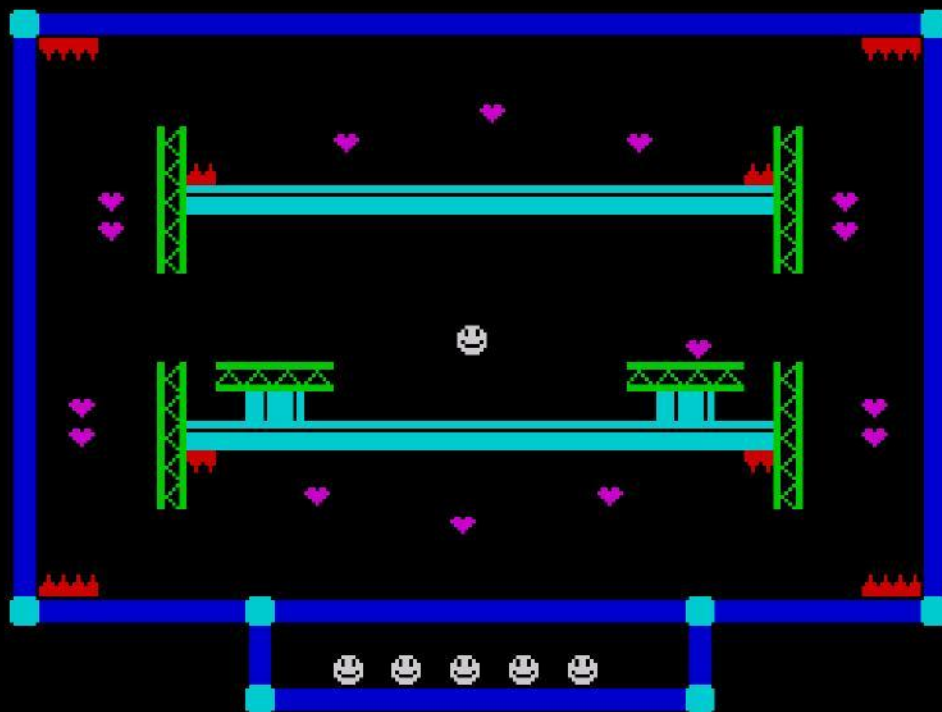
Working out the best route to take is also important, as some hearts have to be collected last otherwise you will plummet into those red spikes and lose a life.

The graphics are basic looking, but convey the game really well. The hero moves smoothly and control is very responsive, which is a good thing in this game.

Sound is limited to bouncing thuds, collecting hearts or dying, but again that's all this game needs really. Maybe some background music could have helped, but the gameplay will soon have you concentrating hard on completing a level.

There are only ten levels, which is a pity, because the concept is well thought out and there are plenty more opportunities to create some really clever levels.

An excellent little game that is definitely worth playing.



Real Media Releases

Games get updated for special release



Two of my Spectrum games have been updated and are about to get released on real media.

That means tape.. remember that?

It has been an ambition of mine since I was a kid, playing games on my tiny 14 inch portable television, and now thanks to **Cronosoft**, that dream is about to come reality.

I have been releasing free Spectrum games for years as downloadable files, but now you will be able to own the real thing, on tape, with some great art work provided by Kevin McGrorty.

For these releases though, I didn't want to just put out the same games that were free to download, I wanted to make them worthwhile, so I set about updating them.

Toofy In Fan Land

The first game I chose was Toofy In Fan Land, because it was one of my early games that provided the player with a unique challenge.

The original was written using version 3.0 of Arcade Games Designer, and many new versions have been released since then, providing a little bit more memory and additional extras not present in the early releases.

With that in mind I set about re-writing the game, from scratch, into version 4.6.

I kept most of the original map, but added a further 8 rooms to visit, and changed a few of the later ones around to modify the game map.

With the extra rooms I added another graphic style, so things look different towards the end of the game.

I also changed some of the enemy sprites and gave them colour, replacing the standard white only available in 3.0. I added more movement patterns which allowed me to add extra obstacles, which in some rooms, completely changes the route Toofy has to take.

With more rooms, comes more nuts, and Toofy now has to collect 51 to complete the game 100%.

The overall changes make the game slightly harder, much longer and worth spending a few quid on to have the real thing.

The game will be released as a free download several months after the tape version, but please help support Cronosoft to keep these real releases going.

Deep Core Raider

Deep Core Raider is my latest release, which is why I wanted to get it out on real tape. It would also give me the opportunity to address some issues noted in several reviews.

The available memory left to me was very tight, around 1.8k, and there was a lot of work to do to update the game.

The first major change was the levels, you now have to collect ALL items before you can move on. This puts additional pressure on the fuel limit too, so players have to be careful.

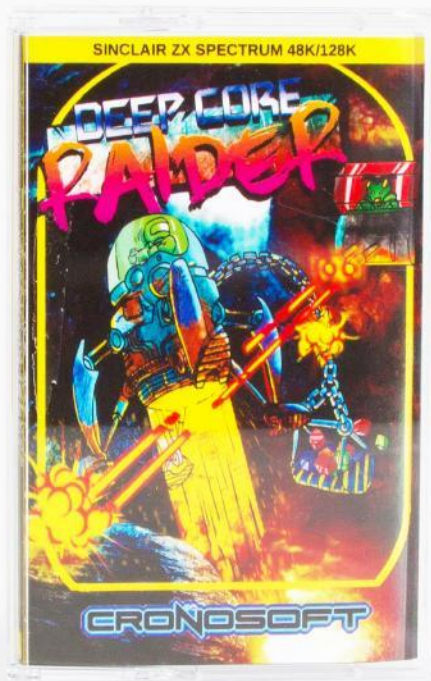
You can now also move back up into the previous screens to collect left behind items.

Navigation is made easier by careful placement of angle blocks and there is no need to be pixel perfect when destroying mines or moving through tight places. This makes the game much more playable.

To make that happen more than 50% of the screens have been changed. Some only slightly, others more so. There is also a completely different end screen.

All of this makes for a much better game and took just 312 bytes. That is more testament to ACG than me though!

Both games have new loading screens based on Kevin's great art work.



TWO NEW RELEASES

CRONOSOFT



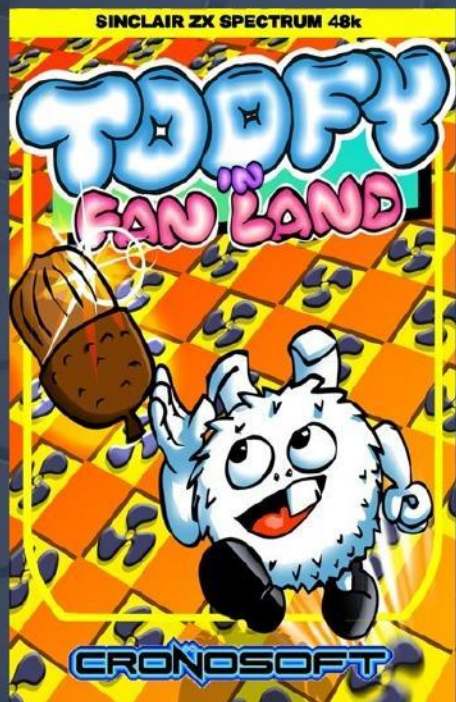
DEEP CORE RAIDER+

By Paul Jenkinson

Updated for this release

The universe is huge, the planets and moons numerous and the minerals hidden therein possibly unlimited.

Do you have what it takes to be a Deep Core Raider?



TOOFY IN FAN LAND+

By Paul Jenkinson

Updated for this release

Guide Toofy around the crazy Fan Land in search of his missing nuts.

Horizontal and vertically challenging platform game that will tease your brain.

Available from <http://cronosoft.orgfree.com>